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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the issue of using alternative databases to support research on historical topics. The literature on online searching in history is not as well developed, nor as extensive, as literature about online searching in other subject areas. In addition, there are only two major databases that are history-specific in terms of subject coverage. Two subfields of history were chosen and information requests for these subfields was turned into search queries and searched in various DIALOG files. Retrieved items were reviewed to determine relevance, recall, and precision. This study found that information of use to historians and to anyone performing historical research can be found in databases that do not market themselves for use in historical research; a major portion of the information found was in files that do not appear at first glance to be of use to historical researchers. Librarians must be innovative when it comes to serving the historian; the information is available to those who know how to approach the question and where to find the information. Fifteen tables depict data presented by the DIALOG file, data presented by question, and a comparison of databases. Appendices contain the DIALOG bluesheet table, a five-step search strategy with a sample worksheet, a sample data gathering worksheet, and a list of selected titles. (Contains 12 references.) (Author/AEF)

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DATABASE SEARCHING FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the Kent State University School of Library Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Library Science

by
Michael Lane Penrod
November, 1994

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the issue of alternative databases that can be used to support research on historical topics. The literature on the issue of online searching in history is not as well developed, nor as extensive, as literature about online searching in other subject areas. Also, there are only two major databases that are history-specific in terms of subject coverage. Two subfields of history were chosen as a basis for searching. The DIALOG system was searched. Retrieved items were reviewed to determine relevance, recall, and precision. This study found that information of use to historians and to anyone performing historical research can be found in databases that do not market themselves for use in historical research.

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INTRODUCTION

History is one of the most diverse academic disciplines. History is the study of change through time. But what changes are studied? The answer is everything. Every topic or area of the human condition has a history to it and it is because of this broad-based nature of historical research that librarians should view history as compatible to all other topics. Historians can view themselves as social historians, political historians, military historians, and historians of medicine, to name just a few areas of specialty. Due to this variety, the needs of the historian may be more diverse than the needs of a chemist or a botanist.

In the area of online bibliographic databases, the historian has been left out. Although history is one of the basic fields of study in undergraduate liberal education and university graduate programs, use of machine-readable databases and data archives for class work and research in history has been slow to develop (Falk, 1982 and Grinell, 1987). It is due to this lack of history-specific database development that historians must find other ways or approaches to doing their research. One way in which to overcome this lack of history-specific databases is to identify alternative databases that may contain historical information, even thought they are not history-specific. This is the purpose of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When looking at the body of library literature as a whole, the portion that is devoted to the study of the historian is quite small when compared to the research that has focused on other types/groups of scholars. Particularly, when looking at the needs of users, "relatively few have focused on the historian" (Case, 1991). Also, when historians are studied, their needs are looked at in a very narrow light. Few have considered the historian as a potential user of new technologies. One study of the methods of historians

found that many used manual filing techniques, piles of index cards, and local sources in their research (Case, 1991). Still another author was asked by a history professor, "What is an online literature search?" (Emmick, 1989). These incidents have lead to the assumption that historians are unwilling to adapt their research strategies. Another study found that historians viewed the computer as simply a glorified typewriter and that historians "have been rather quick to embrace computers for the purpose of word processing" (Gillmore, 1992). Instead of looking for reasons why historians do not use computers more often, librarians should look to see what the historian does and needs, then direct him or her to the appropriate sources.

Few history-specific databases have been developed. The reasons for this lack of development have to do with what the historian does and how he or she does it. Often the historian uses not only the text of the sources but also the context of the sources, which may include everything from the era in which it is written to the kind of paper it is written on. "This need for contextual evidence gibes uneasily with the decontextualizing effects of digitization" (Gillmore, 1992). Still another reason that few history-specific databases have been developed is the fact that the study of history is so comprehensive and much larger in scope that the study of many other fields. For instance, the field of nuclear sciences has only been around in this century and it developed along with computers, while the study of history and its main research sources have been around for hundreds of years. "Only a small portion of the historical bibliographic trail is online. In history, ongoing bibliographies and specialized sources that are not online abound" (Kireson, 1982). A more recent study confirms this, "if you glance at the table of contents of Reference Sources in History, one can see the resources which the library provides the historian and very few are online" (Gillmore, 1992). The historian has to find a way to adapt tot the current situation "until the demand, interest, and funding to provide these retrospective sources online increases" (Stern, 1988).

Most of the literature about online databases in history is descriptive, presenting Historical Abstracts and/or America: History and Life and explaining how these two databases work (see for example: Falk (1983) and Atkinson (1989)).. From this it is clear that "the literature concerning history-specific databases is not well developed. Further studies could address adjustments that librarians and historians must make to work more effectively together" (Grinell, 1987). One of these adjustments is to look for alternative databases for use in historical research. The historical information is out there, now librarians need to direct the historians to the information and librarians need to be creative in finding this information. "Through literature retrieval necessitates use of files from other disciplines and creativity in choosing databases is indispensable to comprehensive searching in the subject area" (Brody, 1984).

STATEMENT ON AUDIENCE

For this study the audience of historians will be defined as those people seeking historical information of an advanced level. Beginning undergraduates and the casual reader of history can meet most of their needs with sources that are not online or with Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life. It is the senior level or graduate level history major and professors that need information that alternative databases can provide. This definition should not be viewed as a rigid rule but as a framework of reference. People who need information of an advanced level on history-oriented topics can be well served by searching alternative databases, even if they are not affiliated with an institution of higher education.

METHODOLOGY

In order to attempt to identify databases suitable for traditional history research, the following was done. Two subfields of history were chosen and information requests for these subfields were turned into search queries and searched in various DIALOG files.

Then the retrieved records were reviewed to determine relevance, recall, and precision (defined on next page). The role of the search queries is to identify databases that contain information of an historical nature.

The two subfields chosen were Pre-1851 Ohio History and the Reform Movements of the Early 1800s (also called the Second Great Awakening). These two subfields were chosen because they are areas of interest to the searcher and because the searcher has done in-depth studying in these areas. The information requests for these two subfields were developed by a professor of history at Ohio University who concentrates on these two areas in his research. These questions are based on questions developed for senior level final examinations, but they have been modified to be used as a basis for this study. These modifications were done to make the questions more manageable (i.e. more specific, more narrowly defined) in an online setting. The questions for Ohio are:

1. Discuss Tecumseh and his role in the Indian wars.
2. What was/is the Northwest Ordinance?
3. Who built the Indian mounds and why?
4. Discuss the role of canals and railroads in Ohio.
5. What was the Underground Railroad?

The questions for Reform are:

1. Who were/are the Shakers?
2. Who was Elizabeth Cady Stanton?
3. What was the Temperance Movement?
4. Discuss the issue of abolitionism?
5. Who was Lyman Beecher?

Search queries were formed for each of these questions and the queries were searched in various DIALOG files. All records that were retrieved were examined to determine their relevance to the original question. "Unfortunately, relevance is an abstract notion and an illusive property. As yet, it can be precisely defined nor accurately measured"

(Pao, 1989). However for this study relevance was determined with the help of the same professor who developed the questions. This method was chosen because the person who requests the information should be the same person who judges relevance. Each item was reviewed and evaluated by using a four point-scale ranging from very relevant to not relevant. Determining relevance does involve some degree of subjectivity. However, a retrieval transaction is considered successful when the retrieved documents are relevant to the person who requests them. Both the searcher and the professor can be considered to be subject experts in the field, and both were involved in the relevance decisions. Recall was defined for this study as a percentage of the total documents retrieved in all files that are searched for each question. This was done to determine which file or files contain more information for each query and for each subfield. Precision was defined as a percentage of relevant documents in each file to the total number of retrieved documents in the same file. These searches were done with the DIALOG system, this system was chosen because DIALOG is a well-known service with a vast selection of databases and because of accessibility to do the required searching for this study.

The searches were done following the same basic guidelines as given by the DIALOG service (see Sample DIALOG Search Tips and Worksheet at the end of this study). The particular databases that were searched were determined by reviewing the DIALOG Bluesheets to decide which databases contain information that is related to the topics of the queries. Individual databases were searched (as opposed to doing global searches) so that the features of each database could be used to their fullest extent. As well, both keyword and descriptors were searched in order to maximize the search results. The goal of this study was to find historical information, not to compare the indexing quality of each database. Each database is slightly different and in order to find the information, searches may have been slightly modified for a particular database. This was only done due to structural changes in the databases; the intellectual focus of the questions was not be changed. For example, in a brief pre-test of the questions, one database indexed items

on the Shakers under the term Shaker and another database indexed similar items under the term United Society of Believers (the society's official name). If these searches were not adapted, or variances such as this one, then several relevant documents would have been missed. All identified variants and alternative terms were also searched. An example of a variant term is Shaker versus Shakers and an example of an alternative term is United Society of Believers.

DATA TO BE COLLECTED

Not only were the results of the searches collected, but also information on the databases was collected. This information includes: origin, purpose, scope, coverage, and all search fields of the databases. This information can be found in Appendix 1.

CHOICE OF DATABASES

The criteria for the selection of databases was chosen from the history subfield orientation. The databases were viewed in light of the focus of the Ohio history and the history of the reform movements. For the Ohio history questions, the databases must contain information on Ohio as geographical area, the time period of pre-1851, and have subject coverage on the same subjects in the questions. For example, on the canal/railroad question, a database that deals with transportation will be searched. For the questions on the reform movements, similar subject coverage is also important. For example; the question on Lyman Beecher was searched in databases that dealt with religion. Also important is that the databases deal with the 19th century and cover the United States as a geographic area. After a core of databases is grouped for each subfield, supplemental files that are question specific may have been searched to fully answer the question. For a list of databases see Table 1.

HISTORY-SPECIFIC DATABASES

What does history-specific mean? For this study, a history-specific database is a database that primarily focuses on and is marketed for historical research. In the DIALOG system there are only two history-specific databases: Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life. Historical Abstracts can not be used in this study because it does not deal with the history of North America. Therefore, the only true history-specific database in this study is America: History and Life. Some of the other databases do treat history as a unique subject area, such a Magazine Index and Art & Humanities Search.

Most of the files searched in this study were selected on the basis of the discipline subfield and some were selected on a question basis. For example, Biography Master Index was used for the questions on Tecumseh, Stanton, and Beecher. Any database that did not list history as a subject area in the DIALOG Bluesheets was considered as non-history-specific.

EXPLANATION OF FOUR POINT SCALE AND RELEVANCE JUDGING

The retrieved documents from the search queries were analyzed in the following manner. First, all retrieved items were reviewed by the searcher at the computer terminal to weed out obvious non-relevant items. This was done to keep from wasting time reviewing all items with the four point scale. The searcher is qualified to do this pre-reviewing because of previous academic study of an advanced level in these areas. Second, each item remaining was reviewed by using a four point scale ranging from very relevant to not relevant. This ranking was used to provide a means to measure the items that are retrieved in relation to each other. Point one is for items of high relevance, such an item would deal directly with the intent of the question and would deal with it completely as one subject. For example, a dissertation or a scholarly article on Tecumseh would be classed here. Point two is for items of good relevance, such an item would deal with the intended subject but on a lesser scale than point one items. For

example, a book on the great Indian leaders of the 1800's that covers Tecumseh as well as others. Point three is for items that are slightly relevant, such an item would be considered a good retrieval but it does not fulfill the intent of the question. For example, a children's book on Tecumseh. Point four is for items that are not relevant. For example, items retrieved on the Civil War general, William Tecumseh Sherman. Only items that were labeled as ones or twos were used in the computations for recall and precision. Finally, tables were constructed to illustrate the findings of this study.

TABLE 1

DATABASE LIST

The following is a listing of all of the files that were searched, their abbreviations, and their file numbers:

Name	Abbreviation	File Number
NTIS	NTIS	6
SOCIAL SCISEARCH	SOCSCI	7
DISSERTATIONS ABSTRACTS	DISABS	35
SOCIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS	SOCABS	37
AMERICA: HISTORY AND LIFE	AHL	38
ENVIROLINE	ENV	40
MAGAZINE INDEX	MAG	47
PHILOSOPHER INDEX	PHILO	57
GEOARCHIVE	GEOARC	58
ACADEMIC INDEX	ACA	88
U.S. POLITICAL SCIENCE DOCUMENTS	USPSD	93
WATER RESOURCES ABSTRACTS	WATRES	117
EVERYMANS ENCYCLOPAEDIA	EVERY	182
RELIGION INDEX	RELIG	190
BIOGRAPHY MASTER INDEX	BIOMAS	287
GEOBASE	GEOBAS	292
ARTS & HUMANITIES SEARCH	ARTHUM	439
NEWSPAPER AND PERIODICAL ABSTRACTS	NEWPDS	484

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Question: Discuss Tecumseh and his role in the Indian wars.

The search for information on Tecumseh was very interesting in terms of the retrieved documents (Table 2). The inverse relationship between precision and recall is very clear, especially in America: History and Life (hereafter called AHL) which had a precision rate of seventy-nine percent and a recall rate of only twelve percent. An inverse relationship is also shown in Magazine Index with a forty-two percent precision rate and a nine percent recall rate.

TABLE 2

OHIO - TECUMSEH

QUERY: S: TECUMSEH AND OHIO

DATABASE	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES				
SOCSCI	50	15	.19 (15/50)	.04 (15/338)
DISABS	36	2	.06 (2/36)	.01 (2/338)
AHL	52	41	.79 (41/52)	.12 (41/338)
MAG	72	30	.42 (30/72)	.09 (30/338)
ACA	37	8	.22 (8/37)	.02 (8/338)
ARTHUM	36	24	.67 (24/36)	.07 (24/338)
NEWPDS	7	7	1.0 (7/7)	.01 (7/338)
SUPPLEMENTAL FILES				
BIOMAS	45	4	.09 (4/45)	.01 (4/338)
GEOARC	2	1	.50 (1/2)	.01 (1/338)
GEOBAS	1	1	1.0 (1/1)	.01 (1/338)
TOTALS	338	133	39 (133/338)	

What makes these statistics so interesting is the fact that so many of the retrieved items were not relevant to the question. Most of these items were on the Civil War general, William Tecumseh Sherman. Therefore, these were good retrievals but they could not be considered as relevant to the original question. For example, of the thirty-six dissertations that were found, only two were considered to be relevant. Most of them were on General Sherman. Also, one would expect recall to be low due to the fact that Dissertation Abstracts only deals with one type of publication. General Sherman also had a large impact in Biography Master Index, only four of forty-five items were relevant to this study. Worthy of note is the one item in Geobase. Geobase covers social geography and an item on the Indian's fight to keep the Ohio country was found.

Question: What was/is the Northwest Ordinance?

The search information on the Northwest Ordinance (Table 3) gave the highest total recall in this study, 69 percent. The question for Lyman Beecher also gave this rating. It is interesting to note that Academic Index retrieved fourteen items while Magazine Index retrieved only four items. Both indexes are produced by the same company, Information Access Company, with Academic Index covering scholarly journals and Magazine Index covering popular magazines. For this question, the scholarly index produced more in terms of recall. Magazine Index was more helpful for the Tecumseh question. This is because the Northwest Ordinance is not given as much attention as is Tecumseh, particularly in Ohio. I find this of interest since the Northwest Ordinance is one of the founding documents of our country, just like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Perhaps this is because historical figures are more popular than historical documents.

Also of interest are the results from Dissertation Abstracts. Only one of the five items was relevant to the intended historical question, the others compared the Ordinance to other documents. One used the Northwest Ordinance as evidence that it is

unconstitutional for the U.S. government to maintain Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands as non-state possessions of our country.

TABLE 3

OHIO - NORTHWEST ORDINANCE

QUERY: S: NORTHWEST ORDINANCE

DATABASE	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES				
SOCSCI	8	8	1.0 (8.8)	.11 (8/72)
DISABS	5	1	.20 (1/5)	.01 (1/72)
AHL	19	14	.74 (14/19)	.19 (14/72)
MAG	4	4	1.0 (4/4)	.06 (4/72)
ACA	14	7	.50 (7/14)	.10 (7/72)
ARTHUM	11	9	.82 (9/11)	.13 (9/72)
NEWPDS	4	3	.75 (3/4)	.04 (3/72)
SUPPLEMENTAL				
GEOBAS	4	3	.75 (3/4)	.04 (3/72)
USPSD	3	1	.34 (1/3)	.01 (1/72)
TOTALS	72	50	.69 (50/72)	

Question: Who built the Indian mounds and why?

The search for information on the Indian mounds of Ohio (Table 4) proved to be one of the most interesting of all of the questions in terms of the types of items retrieved. After expanding the term mound, it was decided that the best way to search would be to construct the following query:

(mound or mounds or moundbuilders) and Ohio.

This was done because no other expansions of mound would have been appropriate to the question and any truncations would have only added non-relevant items. The searches for this question brought up two things worthy of notice.

TABLE 4

OHIO - MOUNDS

QUERY: S: (MOUND OR MOUNDBUILDERS) AND OHIO

DATABASE	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES	3	3	1.0 (3/3)	.02 (3/188)
DISABS	13	10	.77 (10/13)	.05 (10/188)
AHL	14	6	.43 (6/14)	.03 (6/188)
MAG	9	5	.56 (5/9)	.03 (5/188)
ACA	114	17	.15 (17/114)	.09 (17/188)
ARTHUM	2	2	1.0 (2.2)	.01 (2/188)
NEWPDS	9	2	.22 (2/9)	.01 (2/188)
SUPPLEMENTAL				
GEOARC	11	4	.36 (4/11)	.02 (4/188)
ENV	13	0	0	0
TOTALS	188	49	.26 (49/188)	

First, records were found throughout all of the files that dealt with baseball. I realized that the term baseball "mound" was what was causing this, but if I had deleted the term mound I would not have found items by the name of the mounds, for example, the Serpent Mound.

Second, when Enviroline was searched because it covers land use as a subject area it produced thirteen items all of which dealt with the Monsanto Mound Nuclear Facility

near Miamisburg, Ohio. These are not relevant even though they matched the search query.

It is worth noting that Academic Index had a higher recall than AHL did, even though AHL treats American Prehistory as a separate subject area. Geoarchive was surprisingly helpful with it items on the geology of the area around the Serpent Mound.

Question: Discuss the role of canals and railroads in Ohio.

The recall by file and the overall recall for the question on canals and railroads of Ohio were very low (Table 5). The main reason for this is that several of the names of the early canals and railroads are still in use today. Several items on train accidents and improving safety on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad were found.

Surprisingly, AHL gave a low precision rating of 37 percent even though it had the largest number of retrievals. Most of the retrieved items in AHL and some in the other databases did not meet the pre-1851 time period criteria. Also, the supplemental files that were searched for this question provided some good information. Geobase and NTIS both cover transportation, and Water Resources Abstracts covers engineering and water usage. All three of these databases gave information that was relevant to the intended question and all three of the databases do not appear to be of use to historical research when glancing through the Bluesheets.

Because this question retrieved over five hundred items, it perhaps would have been more efficient to split these two topics apart, instead of looking for information on the early transportation system as a whole.

TABLE 5

OHIO - CANALS/RAILROADS

QUERY: S: (CANAL? OR RAILROAD?) AND OHIO

DATABASE	#RETR	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES				
SOCSCI	13	9	.69 (9/13)	.02 (9/510)
DISABS	42	12	.29 (12/42)	.02 (12/510)
AHL	156	57	.37 (57/156)	.11 (57/510)
MAG	117	17	.15 (17/117)	.03 (17/510)
ACA	59	4	.07 (4/59)	.01 (4/510)
ARTHUM	13	10	.77 (10/13)	.02 (10/510
NEWPDS	69	10	.14 (10/69)	.02 (10/510)
SUPPLEMENTAL				
GEOBAS	8	2	.25 (2/8)	.004 (2/510)
NTIS	28	2	.07 (2/28)	.004 (2/510)
WATRES	5	1	.20 (1/5)	.002 (1/510)
TOTALS	510	124	.24 (124/510)	

Question: What was the Underground Railroad?

For the question on the Underground Railroad, America: History and Life and Newspaper and Periodical Abstracts were by far the most successful to search in terms of relevant hits, while Arts and Humanities Index had the highest precision rating at 71 percent (Table 6). For this question, dozens of items were found on what is called the New Underground Railroad or the Sanctuary Movement. This is a system like the one that helped slaves escape to the North. But today, it is a system to help abused wives and

children to hide from abusive husbands and unfair courts. Therefore, recall by file and overall recall were low due to the large number of non-relevant, hits. Sanctuary items were also numerous in Religion Index where fourteen out of fifteen items were found to deal with the more recent sense of the underground railway concept.. However, the one item that was judged to be relevant in Religion Index justified doing the search. This one work dealt exclusively with the moral justifications for helping slaves to escape from their masters.

TABLE 6

OHIO - UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

QUERY: S: UNDERGROUND ( ) RAILROAD AND OHIO
S: UNDERGROUND ( ) RAILROAD AND (SLAVE OR SLAVERY)

DATABASE	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES				
SOCSCI	9	3	.34 (3/9)	.01 (3/239)
DISABS	7	3	.43 (3/7)	.01 (3/239)
AHL	47	28	.60 (28/47)	.12 (28/239)
MAG	14	5	.36 (5/14)	.02 (5/239)
ACA	92	18	.16 (18/112)	.08 (18/239)
ARTHUM	7	5	.71 (5/7)	.02 (5/239)
NEWPDS	48	30	.63 (30/48)	.13 (30/239)
SUPPLEMENTAL				
RELIG	15	1	.07 (1/15)	.004 (1/239)
TOTALS	239	93		.39 (93/239)

So even though one would have to weed through results such as this search gave, the result of finding this exact match to the question far outweighs the impact the statistics give for the database. With only a seven percent precision rate and a four tenths of a percent recall rate the statistics could lead one away from this database. If that were to happen, then extremely relevant information would not be located.

Question: Who were/are the Shakers?

The question on the Shakers yielded the largest number of hits with a total of 835 (Table 7). This is due to the large number of items which dealt with the furniture made by the Shaker community which is highly valued today. Therefore, these hits were non-relevant due to the fact that items on the Shaker society were the goal of this question.

Again, the inverse relationship between recall and precision is quite obvious. AHL had the highest recall rate of eleven percent, while having one of the lowest precision rates at 39 percent. Even Dissertation Abstracts which only covers dissertations had a higher precision rate (65 percent).

Philosophers Index yielded a 100 percent precision rate for this question. The two items found dealt with the strict religious values and the conservative lifestyle of the Shaker community. Also, the results from Magazine Index and Academic Index are again worthy of notice. Academic Index had a much higher precision(74 percent) than Magazine Index (10 percent). Magazine Index produced nearly two hundred more documents than Academic Index but most of these two hundred dealt with Shaker furniture. This is another case where the more scholarly database was more successful in terms of precision even though more items were found in the other index.

TABLE 7

REFORM - SHAKERS

QUERY: S: UNITED ( ) SOCIETY ( ) OF ( ) BELIEVERS OR SHAKER?

DATABASE	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES				
SOCSCI	44	29	.66 (29/44)	.03 (29/835)
DISABS	52	34	.65 (34/835)	.04 (34/835)
SOCABS	29	22	.76 (22/29)	.03 (22/835)
AHL	234	92	.39 (92/234)	.11 (92/835)
MAG	220	22	.10 (22/220)	.03 (22/835)
PHILO	2	2	1.0 (2/2)	.005 (2/835)
ACA	23	17	.74 (17/23)	.02 (17/835)
ARTHUM	77	61	.79 (61/77)	.07 (61/835)
RELIG	129	15	.12 (15/129)	.01(15/835)
SUPPLEMENTAL				
GEOBAS	19	2	.11 (2/19)	.005 (2/835)
EVERY	3	2	.66 92/3)	.005 (2/835)
USPSD	3	1	.34 (1/3)	.005 (1/835)
TOTALS	835	299	.36 (299/835)	

Question: Who was Elizabeth Cady Stanton?

The question on Elizabeth Cady Stanton gave some very interesting results (Table 8). Four databases had 100 percent precision rates. This indicates that Stanton has been the subject of study by many different fields. Among these are historians, the womens' rights movement, writers, and the religious community researchers.

All four of the items from Religion Index were found to be relevant to this study. These four works dealt with evaluations of Stantons' revision of the Holy Bible into the Womens Bible. AHL had the largest recall rate at 15 percent. But this is still low and it indicates the large amount of information on Stanton is outside of the history-specific databases.

TABLE 8

REFORM - ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

QUERY: S: ELIZABETH ( ) CADY ( ) STANTON
S: CADY AND STANTON
S: STANTON AND FEMINISM

DATABASE	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES				
SOCSCI	11	10	.91 (10/11)	.05 (10/207)
DISABS	23	15	.65 (15/23)	.07 (15/207)
SOCABS	3	2	.67 (2/3)	.01 (2/207))
AHL	53	31	.58 (31/53)	.15 (31/207)
MAG	31	19	.61 (19/31)	.09 (19/207))
PHILO	1	1	1.0 (1/1)	.01 (1/207)
ACA	60	19	.32 (19/60))	.09 (19/207))
ARTHUM	1	1	1.0 (1/1))	.01 (1/207)
RELIG	4	4	1.0 (4/4)	.02 (4/207))
SUPPLEMENTAL				
NEWPDS	15	8	.53 (8/15)	.04 (8/207)
BIOMAS	5	5	1.0 (5/5)	.02 (5/207)
TOTALS	207	115	.56 (115/207)	

Queries for this question brought up biographies of her writings, and works dealing with new age eco-feminism. In fact, one item began with the author hoping for the day when all women would publicly bow down to the Goddess(i.e. Mother Earth, Mother Nature). This item was indexed with the term Stanton because Stanton was the leader of the early women's rights movement, but this item was not applicable to the historical Stanton.

Question: What was the Temperance Movement?

When searching for information on the nineteenth century temperance movements, several hundred items were found (Table 9). Though much was retrieved, very little was judged as relevant due to the time period limitation. Many works dealt with Prohibition, the culmination of efforts from nearly a hundred years prior to its enactment. Also, several records were on the temperance movements of today, including some anti-drug campaigns.

AHL had the highest recall at 22 percent and also had the second highest precision at 72 percent. Obviously, this file successfully answers the question. But other files also have some very good information, particularly Religion Index with a 53 percent precision rate and Geobase with a one hundred percent precision rate.

TABLE 9

REFORM - TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

QUERY: S: TEMPERANCE AND MOVEMENT
S: TEMPERANCE ( ) MOVEMENT

DATABASE	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES				
SOCSCI	19	8	.42 (8/19)	.01 (8/653)
DISABS	29	14	.48 (14/29)	.02 (14/653)
SOCABS	46	10	.22 (10/46)	.02 (10/653)
AHL	202	146	.72 (146/202)	.22 (146/653)
MAG	9	4	.44 (4/9)	.005 (4/653)
PHILO	32	4	.13 (4/32)	.005 (4/653)
ACA	112	31	.28 (31/112)	.05 (31/653)
ARTHUM	136	50	.37 (50/136)	.08 (50/653)
RELIG	17	9	.53 (9/17)	.01 (9/653)
SUPPLEMENTAL				
GEOBAS	2	2	1.0 (2/2)	.005 (2/653)
NEWPDS	34	19	.56 (19/34)	.03 (19/653)
EVERY	15	2	.13 (2/15)	.005 (2/653)
TOTALS	653	299	.46 (299/653)	

Question: Discuss the issue of abolitionism.

For the question on abolitionism, the following is worthy of notice (Table 10). AHL had the highest recall at thirty percent. Practically every file had a precision rate of over fifty percent. Religion Index was again very useful for this question with a precision rate of sixty percent.

Of interest when searching this question was that several records that were found that were judged to be non-relevant because they dealt with calling for the abolishment of the fur trade and hunting and trapping. Again, another surprise.

For this question the results from Magazine Index gave a much higher precision score (59 percent) than did Academic Index (25 percent), even though Academic index had many more hits. For this question, the less scholarly index out-performed the scholarly one in terms of precision.

TABLE 10

REFORM - ABOLITIONISM

QUERY: S: ABOLITION OR ANTI-SLAVERY OR ABOLITIONISM

DATABASE	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES				
SOCSCI	36	28	.78 (28/36)	.06 (28/436)
DISABS	15	10	.67 (10/15)	.03 (10/436)
SOCABS	21	6	.29 (6/21)	.01 (6/436)
AHL	196	131	.66 (131/197)	.30 (131/436)
MAG	17	10	.59 (10/17)	.03 (10/436)
PHILO	10	5	.50 (5/10)	.01 (5/436)
ACA	63	16	.25 (16/63)	.03 (16/436)
ARTHUM	47	34	.72 (34/47)	.08 (34/436)
RELIG	30	18	.60 (18/30)	.04 (18/436)
TOTALS	436	258	.59 (258/436)	

Question: Who was Lyman Beecher?

The question about Lyman Beecher yielded the second lowest number of hits of all of the questions at 123 (the Northwest Ordinance had only 72), but it had the same overall recall rate as the question on the Northwest Ordinance (69 percent). This search was so specific that many files had one hundred percent precision. Religion Index had the

TABLE 11

REFORM - LYMAN BEECHER

QUERY: S: LYMAN ( ) BEECHER

DATABASE	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION	RECALL
CORE FILES				
SOCSCI	1	1	1.0 (1/1)	.01 (1/123)
DISABS	21	14	.67 (14/21)	.11 (14/123)
SOCABS	1	1	1.0 (1/1)	.01 (1/123)
AHL	31	19	.61 (19/31)	.15 (19/123)
MAG	4	4	1.0 (4/4)	.03 (4/123)
PHILO	0	0	0	0
ACA	9	6	.34 (6/9)	.05 (6/123)
ARTHUM	7	7	1.0 (7/7)	.07 (7/123)
RELIG	30	25	.83 (25/30)	.20 (25/123)
SUPPLEMENTAL				
NEWPDS	4	4	1.0 (4/4)	.03 (4/123)
EVERY	3	1	.34 (1/3)	.01 (1/123)
BIOMAS	12	3	.25 (3/12)	.02 (3/123)
TOTALS	123	85	.69 (85/123)	

highest recall rate for this question at twenty percent; even AHL's recall rate was fifteen percent. For this question, a non-history specific database performed better than AHL. This is because Beecher was, and is, an important figure in the history of American Protestantism.

Of interest is that no items were found on Beecher in Philosophers Index. Both Stanton and Beecher had an impact on nineteenth century American society, so I find it surprising that nothing was found here on him. There was an item found on Stanton in Philosophers Index.

When looking at the data from a question orientation (in contrast to the database orientation), several points stand out (Tables 12 & 13). Though the Shaker question retrieved the most records, its precision was the third lowest. The four very specific questions (Tecumseh, Northwest Ordinance, Stanton, and Beecher) were expected to have the highest precision rates. With the exception of the Tecumseh question, whose rates were affected by the items on General Sherman, this expectation was met. Most surprising was the fact that the question on abolition had such a high precision rate at fifty-nine percent. This high rate for a non-specific question could be attributed to the importance the abolition of slavery has had on all aspects of the American life since the Civil War. In terms of recall, the four highest were Tecumseh at ten percent, Shakers at thirteen percent, Temperance at thirteen percent, and abolition at eleven percent. Each of these all had many false drops though, so their precision was low. Tecumseh had General Sherman, Shakers had records on furniture, and temperance and abolition both had new meanings applicable to today.

When looking at the data from a subfield orientation, one notices that the Reform subfield retrieved over twenty-six percent more items that the Ohio subfield. This can be attributed to the fact that the Reform subfield has a much larger geographical (national vs. regional) scope than the Ohio subfield does.

TABLE 12

DATA PRESENTED BY QUESTION

OHIO

QUESTION	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION
TECUMSEH	338	133	.39 (133/338)
N.W.ORDINANCE	72	50	.69 (50/72)
MOUNDS	188	49	.26 (49/188)
CANAL/RAILROAD	510	124	.24 (124/510)
UNGRD.RAILROAD	239	93	.39 (93/239)
TOTALS	1347	449	.33 (449/1347)
AVERAGE PRECISION			.39

TABLE 13

REFORM

QUESTION	#RETR.	#RELEVANT	PRECISION
SHAKERS	835	299	.36 (299/835)
STANTON	207	115	.56 (115/207)
TEMPERANCE	653	299	.46 (299/653)
ABOLITION	436	258	.59 (258/436)
BEECHER	123	85	.69 (85/123)
TOTALS	2254	1056	.47 (1056/2254)
AVERAGE PRECISION			.53

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study hoped to find information of use to those doing historical research by looking in databases that were not marketed for historical research. Though America: History and Life is an exceptional system, it does not cover everything. One has to be creative when searching for information of an interdisciplinary nature in databases that are for the most part, subject or area specific. The very nature of historical research does not lend itself well to database searching at this time. This is not because online systems

would be of little use to historians, but because very little of the human record is online yet (and even less of what is online is marketed toward the historian). As more systems are built, historians will adapt to them.

Until that day comes, there are some ways that librarians can help those with historical research in an online environment. One must understand the question asked and then know where to go to look for the information. For example, going to a database that covers transportation may be a good source to find information on nineteenth century canal projects.

It is important to view the question in a broader light than as merely a history question and sending the patron to the history database. One must ask, "What is it a history of?" The concept of the question is more important than merely knowing it is a history question.

The librarian must act in an online environment the same way as he or she acts traditionally, as a link to information. Familiarity with the available systems and a successful reference interview are paramount. It is also preferable to have some kind of familiarity with the subject, but this is not always possible. Since online systems attempt to grasp the concepts of an item through identifiers and descriptors, understanding the concept of the question is vital. By knowing that Elizabeth Cady Stanton was an early womens rights activist, instead of just being someone's wife, one can approach the question in a whole new light.

This study shows the importance of being innovative while serving the historian. Information sought in this study was found in unexpected places. Now that this historical information has been found, what can one conclude from this study? Two things are important. One, what databases performed the best in terms of precision and recall? When one compares the databases that were searched in every question (Tables 14 and 15), AHL had by far the highest average recall rate by database (15 percent) of any of the six databases universally used in the searches. But, when one looks at the average

precision rates by database, AHL is no longer in the lead. Both Arts and Humanities Search and Sociological Abstracts had higher average precision rates (70 and 70 percent, respectively) than AHL did (59 percent). This if further proof that AHL should not be used exclusively.

TABLE 14

COMPARISON OF DATABASES BY PRECISION

	SOCSCI	DISABS	AHL	MAG	ACA	ARTHUM
TECUMSEH	.19	.06	.79	.42	.22	.67
NW. ORDIN.	1.0	.20	.74	1.0	.50	.82
IND. MOUNDS	1.0	.77	.43	.56	.15	1.0
CANALS/R.R	.69	.29	.37	.15	.07	.77
UND. R.R.	.34	.43	.60	.36	.16	.71
SHAKERS	.66	.65	.39	.10	.74	.79
STANTON	.91	.65	.58	.61	.32	1.0
TEMPERANCE	.42	.48	.72	.44	.28	.37
ABOLITION	.78	.67	.66	.59	.25	.72
BEECHER	1.0	.67	.61	1.0	.34	1.0
AVERAGE PRECISION BY DATABASE	.70	.49	.59	.52	.30	.79

TABLE 15

COMPARISON OF DATABASES BY RECALL

	SOCSCI	DISABS	AHL	MAG	ACA	ARTHUM
TECUMSEH	.04	.01	.12	.09	.02	.07
NW. ORDIN.	.11	.01	.19	.06	.10	.13
IND. MOUNDS	.02	.05	.03	.03	.09	.01
CANALS/R.R.	.02	.02	.11	.03	.03	.02
UND. R.R.	.01	.01	.12	.02	.08	.02
SHAKERS	.03	.04	.11	.03	.02	.07
STANTON	.05	.07	.15	.09	.09	.01
TEMPERANCE	.01	.02	.22	.005	.05	.08
ABOLITION	.06	.03	.30	.03	.03	.08
BEECHER	.01	.11	.15	.03	.05	.07
AVERAGE RECALL BY DATABASE	.04	.04	.15	.05	.05	.06

Now to the second important item, type of question. Questions that are vague in concept are harder to search in an online setting. The important points to consider are the specificity of the questions and the scope of the question. Biographical questions (Beecher, Tecumseh, and etc.) lend themselves to easier searching and higher precision due to searching by name. Also, by having a smaller scope (Ohio versus U.S.A.) a question can be easier to search. Large scope, general topic questions are likely to lead to lower precision rates. While specific questions (Beecher) can lead to much higher precision rates. The question on Lyman Beecher had three of the six databases with 100 percent precision rates (Table 14).

Librarians must be creative when it comes to serving the historian. The information is available, one just has to know how to approach the question and where to find the information. In this study, a lot of historical information was found even though recall and precision rates were low. A major portion of what was found was in files that do not appear at first glance to be of use to the historian. Thus, this study has been successful.

APPENDIX 1

DIALOG BLUESHEET TABLE

Database:	NTIS (6).
Origin:	National Technical Information Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce.
Purpose:	To disseminate unclassified government-sponsored research, development, and engineering reports (DOE, DoD, and NASA).
Scope:	1964-date, updated biweekly, 1.4+ million records.
Coverage:	Hard and soft sciences, agriculture, behavior and society, civil engineering, and transportation.
Fields:	ab, de, id, sh, and ti.
Database:	Social Scisearch (7).
Origin:	Institute for Scientific Information.
Purpose.	To index literature of the social, behavioral, and related sciences.
Scope:	1972-date, updated weekly, 2.2+ million records.
Coverage:	Anthropology, archaeology, area studies, history, demography, and sociology.
Fields:	ab, de, id, sh, ti, and author keyword.
Database:	Dissertation Abstracts Online (35).
Origin:	University Microfilms International
Purpose:	Index to all American dissertations and those in the U.K. since 1988.
Scope:	1861-date, updated monthly, 1.0+ million records.
Coverage:	"all" subject areas.
Fields:	ab, ti, and de.
Databases:	Sociological Abstracts (37).
Origin:	Sociological Abstracts Incorporated.
Purpose:	To index over 1,600 sources on professional sociology.
Scope:	1963-date, updated five times/year, 300,000+ records.
Coverage:	Culture, rural sociology, womens studies, social development, political interaction, and mass phenomena.
Fields:	ad, de, id, nt, sh, and ti.
Database:	America: History and Life (38).
Origin:	ABC-Clio.
Purpose:	To index over 2,100 journals that relate to the study of history.
Scope:	1964-date, updated quarterly, 150,000+ records.
Coverage:	All topics related to history.
Fields:	ab, de, and ti.

DIALOG BLUESHEET TABLE (cont.)

Database;	Enviroline (40).
Origin:	Environment Abstracts, Congressional Information Service Incorporated.
Purpose:	To index over 1,000 journals on environmental information, conferences, and etc.
Scope:	1971-date, updated monthly, 165,000+ records.
Coverage:	Land use, transportation, and water resource management.
Fields:	ab, de, and ti.
Database:	Magazines Index (47).
Origin:	Information Access Company.
Purpose:	To index over 435 popular North American magazines.
Scope:	1959-1970 and 1973-date, updated monthly, 1.8+ million records.
Coverage:	Social sciences, regional studies, and the environment.
Field:	co, cp, de, ti, pn, and na.
Database:	Philosophers Index (57).
Origin:	Philosophy Documentation Center, Bowling Green State University.
Purpose:	To index over 300 journals and books that cover philosophy and related areas.
Scope:	1940-date, updated quarterly, 160,000+ records.
Coverage:	Ethics, anthropology, political philosophy, and social philosophy.
Fields:	ab, de, and ti.
Database:	Geoarchive (58).
Origin:	Geosystems, U.K.
Purpose:	To index information on geoscience.
Scope:	1974-date, updated monthly, 470,000+ records.
Coverage:	Historical geology, water, exploration, energy, and engineering.
Fields:	de, ti, and gs.
Database:	Academic Index (88).
Origin:	Information Access Company.
Purpose:	To index over 400 scholarly magazines of North America (half of these are also in Magazines Index).
Scope:	1976-date, updated monthly, 450,000+ records.
Coverage:	History, government, anthropology, religion, political science, and sociology.
Fields:	co, cp, de, na, pn, and ti.

DIALOG BLUESHEET TABLE (cont.)

Database:	U.S. Political Science Documents (93).
Origin:	Mid-Atlantic Applications Center, University of Pittsburgh.
Purpose:	To index political science journals
Scope:	1975-date, updated quarterly, 58,000+ records.
Coverage:	Anthropology, area studies, American government, social science methodology, and sociology.
Fields:	ab, de, gs, id, nt, and ti.
Database:	Water Resources Abstracts (117).
Origin:	Water Resource Division, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior.
Purpose:	To index literature submitted to the government by organizations involved in water resource management.
Scope:	1968-date, updated monthly, 230,000+ records.
Coverage:	Supply and conservation, and engineering.
Fields:	ab, ti, de, and sh.
Database:	Everymans Encyclopedia (182).
Origin:	J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., Learned Information Ltd.
Purpose:	This is a comprehensive reference work.
Scope:	6th. edition, 1978, 51,000+ records.
Coverage:	All areas.
Fields:	co, cs, de, sb, tx, and ti.
Database:	Religion Index (190).
Origin:	American Theological Library Association Religion Indexes.
Purpose:	To index sources that have a religious and theological point of view.
Scope:	1975-date, updated monthly, 245,000+ records.
Coverage:	Church history, politics and religion, sociology and religion, ethics, denominations, women, and social history.
Fields:	ab, de, and ti.
Database:	Biography Master Index (287).
Origin:	Gale Research Incorporated.
Purpose:	To index biographies of prominent people.
Scope:	Updated annually, 3.1+ million records.
Coverage:	All areas.
Fields:	na.

DIALOG BLUESHEET TABLE (cont.)

Database:	Geobase (292).
Origin:	Geo Abstracts Ltd., U.K.
Purpose:	to index over 5,000 geographic journals.
Scope:	1980-date, updated monthly, 200,000+ records.
Coverage:	Social geography, environment, transportation, historical geography, natural resources, and regional studies.
Fields:	ab, de, and ti.
Database:	Arts and Humanities Search (439).
Origin:	Institute for Scientific Information.
Purpose:	To index over 1,300 arts and humanities journals as well as related social and natural science journals.
Scope:	1980-date, updated weekly, 1.3+ million records.
Coverage:	Archaeology, history, philosophy, and religion.
Fields:	de, id, and ti.
Database:	Newspaper and Periodical Abstracts (484).
Origin:	University Microfilms International/Data Courier.
Purpose:	To index over 25 national newspapers and over 950 journals.
Scope:	1988-date, newspapers are updated daily and journals are updated weekly, 1.6+ million records.
Coverage:	Personal profiles and social trends.
Fields:	ab, co, de, gn, na, pn, and ti.
* Note:	The areas listed in Coverage are not the only subject areas that the databases covers, the ones listed are ones that could indicate information relevant to this study.
* Note:	The codes listed in Fields stand for the following: ab=abstract, de=descriptor, id=identifier, sh=section heading, ti=title, nt=note, co=company name (Magazine Index) and co=country name (Everymans), cp=caption, pn=product name, na=named person, gs=auxilliary descriptor (Geoarchive) and gs=geographic descriptor (U.S. Pol. Sci. Docu.), cs=historical period, and sb=bibliography.

APPENDIX 2

Search Strategy: Rules-of-Thumb

Planning your search before logging on will save time and money, and help to produce results that are on target. Consider the following steps:

STEP 1.

a. Review the topic. Understand what the end result of the search should be — a large number of general references, a small number of very specific citations, names and addresses, statistical information. Be as precise as possible.

b. Identify separate or independent ideas (concepts) within the topic. Breaking up the topic into separate concepts makes it easier to create groups of synonyms, any one of which might be used to describe the idea.

c. Identify the synonyms (and other alternative expressions) that might be used to describe a particular idea. Write down the individual terms to be used. A Worksheet can be useful for this planning process. (See sample on next page.)

STEP 2.

a. Identify several databases which seem appropriate for the search. The preliminary pages of the *Database Catalog* have been designed especially for this purpose. The paragraphs in the *Database Catalog* and the first page of each Bluesheet describe the subject coverage of the databases more specifically and can be consulted to narrow the choice to the two or three most related to your topic. DIALINDEX, File 411, described on p. 47-55, can also be used to determine the most appropriate databases to use.

b. Check the Bluesheets for Format Options, particularly if nonbibliographic databases are to be searched. Check the *Database Catalog* or the most recent Price List to determine if any of the chosen databases have online DISPLAY/TYPE charges. Verify offline PRINT charges as well.

c. Writing out the actual search statements to identify truncation possibilities and to verify logical and proximity connectors may also be a helpful step.

STEP 3. Log on to the system and perform the search:

a. Select the database using BEGIN and the file number.

b. Select the synonyms for each concept using the SELECT command and the OR connector. Each group of synonyms is called a concept block. The concept blocks can be created in any order.

c. Combine concept blocks using the AND connector and set number of the final set from each synonym group.

STEP 4.

a. Review records online using TYPE command to verify relevancy of the search results. Modify if necessary. (Use LOGOFF HOLD if extra time is needed to rethink the search strategy.)

b. Order offline PRINTs or view results online if appropriate.

STEP 5. BEGIN a new search in a chosen database or LOGOFF to end the search session.

Search Strategy — Sample Worksheet

DIALOG

Requestor _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Date needed _____

****

TOPIC or Objective: _____

_____

_____

CONCEPT A and CONCEPT B and CONCEPT C

or

Databases to Search: _____

Type of material: ___articles ___reports ___patents ___conferences ___other

Authors or companies: _____

Format for review: _____ Format for final output: _____

Years of coverage: _____

Language(s): _____

Other instructions or requirements: _____

_____

_____

****

Taken by _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 3

DATA GATHERING SHEET (SAMPLE)

SUBFIELD:
QUESTION:
CONCEPT (S):
DATABASES TO SEARCH:
GENERIC SEARCH STRATEGY:
SPECIFIC SEARCH STRATEGY:

DATABASE # 1	RETR.	RECALL	PRECISION	#RELEVANT	COMMENTS

DATABASE # 2	RETR.	RECALL	PRECISION	#RELEVANT	COMMENTS

APPENDIX 4

LIST OF SELECTED TITLES

STATEHOOD AND UNION: A HISTORY OF THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE

ESSEX COUNTY LOOKS WEST: THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE OF 1787 AND THE SETTLEMENT OF THE OHIO TERRITORY

OHIO HOPEWELL SETTLEMENT PATTERNS: AN APPLICATION OF THE VACANT CENTER MODEL TO MIDDLE WOODLAND PERIOD INTRACOMMUNITY SETTLEMENT VARIABILITY IN THE UPPER LICKING RIVER VALLEY

FRAGMENT OF THE PAST: THE ATER MOUND BLANKET

AND THE MOUNDBUILDERS VANISHED FROM THE EARTH

THE OHIO CANAL ERA, 1825 - 1913

SYMBOL, STRUCTURE, AND REALITY: FORMS OF WORSHIP OF THE NEW ENGLAND SHAKERS

THE SHAKER CHILDREN'S ORDER

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

THE SEARCH FOR SELF-SOVEREIGNTY: THE ORATORY OF ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

WE ARE ENGAGED AS A BAND OF SISTERS: CLASS AND DOMESTICITY IN THE WASHINGTONIAN TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

LYMAN BEECHER AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM

UNVANQUISHED PURITAN: A PORTRAIT OF LYMAN BEECHER

NORTHERN OPPOSITION TO MID - 19TH CENTURY ABOLITIONISM

ABOLITIONISM: A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

STATION MASTER ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF THOMAS GARRETT

* This list is provided to illustrate the types of items retrieved.

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